

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Pastor as a Parent

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

Code: 80-404

This morning I've always kind of felt that the Sunday after the Shepherds' Conference is an opportunity for me to sort of come down a little bit and maybe just talk to the issue of the heart of the shepherd. We talked about the issues. We talked about the theology. But what about the heart? What about the heart of the man who shepherds the flock of God?

You know, it might seem that just the analogy of a shepherd would give you some indication of it, that you're caring for sheep, sheep are dirty, sheep wander, sheep are stupid, and so forth and so on. So there's...you don't want to carry that analogy too far, obviously. But, I mean, there are some things that we learn about the whole role of shepherding and pastoral ministry from the concept of being a shepherd. But I want to address something that's, I think, more important in one sense, more intimate than that, and more clear as to the attitude you bring to ministry than even that. I want to talk to you about the pastor as a parent--the pastor as a mother, the pastor as a father. To do that, I want to draw you to 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. We're going to look at verse 7 and following. Let me read it to you. We'll read down to verse 12.

"But we proved to be gentle among you as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children, having so fond an affection for you. We were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives because you had become very dear to us. For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You were witnesses and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers. Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."

The pastor as a mother; the pastor as a father. There was a recent conference of pastors led by one who is prominent, a young man, and who is influential in speaking to young pastors, planting churches. This is what he said at the conference to a young generation of men.

"Here's what I've learned. You cast vision for your mission, and if people don't sign up, you move on. You move on. There are people that are going to die in the wilderness, that's just how it is. Too many guys waste too much time trying to move stiff-necked, stubborn, obstinate people. I'm all about blessed subtraction. There's a pile of dead bodies behind our church bus and by God's grace it will be a mountain by the time we're done. You either get on the bus, or you get run over by the bus. Those

are the options, but the bus ain't going to stop. There's people who get in the way of the bus; they've got to get run over. The people who want to take turns driving the bus, they've got to get thrown off. There's nice people who sit on the bus and shut up, they're not helping or hurting, just let them ride along. You know what I'm saying. I'll tell you guys what, you don't do this just for your church planting or replanting. I'm doing it right now; I'm doing it right now. We just took certain guys and rearranged the seats on the bus and yesterday we fired two pastors. They're off the bus; they're under the bus; they're unemployed. I mean you, this will be the defining issue as to whether or not you succeed or fail."

Another one of these young pastors with an influence was being asked by some people in his meetings if he would go a little deeper into the Word, to which he responded, quote: "The jackass in the church is the person who always screams, 'I want to go deeper!'" End quote.

Another one of these young pastors said, "I say a lot of real infuriating stuff, just go through the archives. My goal is to tick twelve, fourteen people off every service. I'm young, I'm rough around the edges, I'm honest, and I'm hyped up on Monster energy drinks. I'm sure to offend you. If that's what you want, I've got plenty of it coming. I don't preach from notes, I preach from memory. I'm bound to make you mad. But the church is full of pot-bellied Christians waiting to shove their spiritual food down their mouths one more time. You're a Pharisee. I've got a complaint department at the church; it's located over the trash bin under my desk. If you need the doctrines of grace to excite you, you're in the wrong church. Let me get a phone book. There's 720 churches in Charlotte; I'm sure we can find one where you can stuff your face until you're so obese spiritually that you can't even move."

Another very prominent, young pastor in the country said that the idea of being a shepherd is obsolete. You're a CEO. Sadly, a new breed of cynical, carnal self-promoters have taken the sacred title of pastor and perverted it. It's really sad. And maybe against the ugliness of that backdrop we can kind of reorient ourselves about the attitude that a pastor has toward his people. Paul was a model. He's been my model through my whole ministry--the ultimate model for me. I not only read the thirteen letters that he wrote and read his life journeys in the book of Acts, but I try to read between the lines. It isn't just what he says; it's what he does that captivates me. It's not just the theology; it's not just the divine revelation regarding theology or doctrine. It is his example that is so critical for me to understand the role that God has called me to.

And there's no really better place to turn to understand the real heart of a pastor than the passage I just read you. Look, this is a very challenging responsibility that he had in Thessalonica. There was no church there. There never had been a church. They didn't know what a church was. They didn't know what a Christian was. This is paganism; this is paganism. What kind of an attitude do you have to have to plant a church in the midst of paganism? Well here you see.

The pattern of ministry is not the pattern of ministry for some person who's in his thirtieth year of pastoral ministry with a group of people with which he's very familiar. This is how you pastor when you plant a church in the middle of paganism. This is the attitude that you have to bring to that.

Chapter 1 spells out that this was very successful. I don't think Paul even thought about a church growth strategy. I don't think he thought about a corporate strategy. He came as a parent, to be a mother and a father to people. And it was impactful, both in chapter 1 as the book opens, and in chapter 2. As chapter 2 closes, there are indications of the immense success that he had planting a church in the midst of paganism, a powerful church, a strong church, an effective church, a saved church, a sanctified church, a suffering church, an evangelistic church, a separated church, a Second-Coming church--and all that's in chapter 1, verses 1 to 10. And in the book of Acts, the seventeenth chapter of Acts, it says that he brought the gospel first to the synagogue and he was there three Sabbaths. How much can you do in three Sabbaths in the synagogue?

Well, it wasn't just those two weeks with the Sabbath on each end; he was there for months. How do you know he was there for months? Because he says in these letters that he labored with his own hands to earn his own living, so he established himself. He was a tent maker; he was a leather worker; he established a business and supported himself. It also says in Philippians 4 that the Philippians sent him money twice to sustain him. So he had to be there long enough to establish his job and have some clients, some customers. He had to be there long enough for word to go by foot to Philippi and back again a couple of times that he was in need. But I think the greatest indication that he was there for a long time was the profound affection that developed between himself and his people. The greatest gift that a pastor could ever give his people was the knowledge that he loved him, that he really loved them, that he would give his life for them. And the greatest gift that he could receive from them was the knowledge that they loved him. This is about building a relationship. This is about building an intimate, profound relationship that is modeled in a family.

Verses 1 to 6 of chapter 2 give us a little bit of an x-ray of a leader. He talks about tenacity, integrity, authority, accountability, humility--the kind of things that you talk about when you talk about leadership. That's kind of the x-ray, kind of looking down into the DNA of his leadership.

But what you have in 7 to 12 is a photograph, not an x-ray but a photograph. You can look at him and see by way of analogy the very image that leadership takes so that things like tenacity, integrity, authority, accountability, humility, and you could add affection and love--the things that are on the inside show up on the outside.

Now I need to say that Paul was under attack at this time, as he always was, every time he went into a pagan city he would be under attack and the attacks would come from the Jews who were constantly plotting his death because they hated the gospel. Or it would come from the Gentiles who were also planning some way to arrest him or punish him or stone him, which they successfully did on

one occasion. People would attack his integrity. They would question his sincerity. They would assault his credibility. They would accuse him of being just another religious fraud, another scam artist, another charlatan who had invented some kind of *philo*-theology and was motivated like everybody else that did that by greed and by power, and prestige and popularity and sexual favors, because that's what false teachers always do--always, always, always. They're always in it for the money, and they're in it for lust. That's what false teachers do, to take advantage of people to become rich. Footnote on that: just finished up the book *Strange Fire*. One of the most compelling statements that is in there is a statistic, a survey done of the 500 million people in the charismatic movement around the world. Ninety percent of those 500 million people believe the prosperity gospel, that if you give money, you'll get health and wealth--90 percent; 87 percent of the people in the movement are below the poverty line. This is a scam to divest the weakest, and those who have the least of what they have for the wealth of the people at the top. That's what false teachers always do. They operate on that basis.

Remember now, the ancient pagan world, the Greek world, was filled with spiritual fakers. They were in every marketplace, they were on every corner. They were everywhere, capturing the minds and the possessions of the gullible public. They were emissaries of Satan who came along as angels of light, disguised as angels of light. So it was very easy to just throw Paul in the same bag and just say he's another one, he's another one.

How does he defend himself? Well, he calls on the Thessalonians to be his defense. And every pastor should be able to do this. Let me show you how he did it. See, he writes this defense of his integrity in chapter 2, and it runs from verse 1 to 12 if you took the whole thing. As he writes this defense I want you to notice what he appeals to: verse 1, "For you yourselves know"; verse 2, middle of the verse, "As you know." Verse 5, middle of the verse, "As you know"; verse 9, "For you recall." Verse 10, "You are witnesses"; verse 11, "Just as you know." They don't need second-hand testimony as to the integrity of his ministry. His credibility is known to them first hand, first hand. They are living illustrations of his credibility.

Back to chapter 1, "He gives thanks to God always for all of them." They are really saved. They are in our Lord Jesus Christ. What is evident is their work of faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope. They are beloved of God. Verse 4, they are elect, the gospel came to them in power, full conviction. And the end of verse 5, "As you know what kind of men we proved to be...you know."

Listen, every pastor should be able to say, "If you question my ministry and my commitment, ask my people." We should be able to say, "You know, you've seen me, you know me." That's not a flat-screen pastor; that's a pastor who understands intimate relationship with his people like parents. Paul viewed himself as a mother; Galatians 4:19, he said...well, he viewed himself like a pregnant mother. He said, "I am in birth pains until Christ is fully formed in you." I'm in birth pains; it's like bringing you to birth; it's like a long pregnancy to bring to birth and the pains and agonies of that.

First Corinthians 4 he saw himself as a father. He says, "You have many *paidagogous*," many *paidagogic* teachers, many people who speak into your life, but you only have one father. So Paul sees himself as the human instrument that brought these people to life. In a very real way, although they are the children of God and it's God who regenerated them, he's the human means. And so he feels like a mother and a father, like he gave them birth, like he has responsibility for them. This is what gives balance to leadership--the gentle care of a mother and the strong example and authority of a father. Those have to combine in the ministry. He was anything but a greedy, carnal, licentious flatterer, consumed with his own self-importance, power, control, manipulation, and abuse to make himself rich and to fulfill his desires, anything but that. So he says, back in verse 3, "Our exhortation doesn't come from error, or impurity or by way of deceit." We're not like false teachers. We've been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. So we never came with flattering speech. We were never motivated by greed--"God is witness"--we didn't seek glory from men from you or anybody else. We didn't even assert our authority as though as apostles of Christ we could have.

But, we proved to be gentle like a mother. Boy, what an amazing contrast. What an amazing contrast. "We proved to be gentle among you," literally, "gentle in the middle of you." It's like family. Gentle; the word "gentle" is used only here and in 2 Timothy 2:24, where it says a servant of the Lord must be gentle. It's *epios* in the Greek; it means "mild," "mild." It means "kind." Paul's style of ministry was to be in the midst of his people, to move among his people, to live among his people and to be marked by kindness, gentleness, tenderness, compassion. I don't think he would have thrown them off the bus and run over them. A spiritual leader cares for his people, concerned about their well-being, sensitive to their development, to their growth, to what they know and what they don't know, to the process of their maturity.

He gives acceptance, respect, kindness, compassion, tolerance of imperfections, patience, loyalty, tender-heartedness. To what degree do you do that? To what degree do you do that? Here it comes, "as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children." That's about as tender as it gets. That is the most intimate, sweet, compassionate, affectionate relationship in all of humanity--"as a nursing mother," *trophos*. It literally means that; it means "one who nurses." Is there anything more beautiful than that? Is there anything more delicate than that? Is there anything more affectionate than that? A mother with her own children; this is not a day-care center. A pastor doesn't run a day-care center. The image is of a nursing mother and the personal care she gives to her little one. He couldn't have come up with any more tender, intimate analogy--there isn't one; no authority here, no dominance here, no self-seeking here, no throw the baby in the dumpster--only the simple duty of a love that spares nothing, but spends itself for the child, knowing that the child is not with a child, should be not with a child, will be, but totally committed to bringing the child to that end.

It says there, “tenderly cares.” It’s a verb, *thalpo*. It actually is literally “to warm with body heat,” “to warm with body heat,” “to pull to oneself.” This is just a beautiful picture here. That same word is used in the Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 22:6 to speak of a mother bird sitting on the little ones in the nest.

So, in spite of a very legitimate claim to apostolic authority, in spite of being a bold, strong, firm, resolute preacher, Paul starts describing his ministry as that which is analogous to a nursing mother so that his authority is put aside for the sake of tenderness and patience. The opening picture is just beautiful. In fact, he stretches the analogy in verse 8, “Having so fond an affection for you, so deep a love, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives because you’ve become very dear to us.”

A fond affection, that’s what drives all of this. It’s driven by love. The verb there, “fond affection,” is talking about a feeling. It’s a verb that refers to a feeling. It is that feeling that a mother has for a baby. They don’t have a relationship. The baby doesn’t communicate; baby doesn’t talk. When you become older, you have a relationship with people. You love people when you get to know people. But there’s something about a mother when that baby is placed in her arms. I think the medical people say it’s bonding. It is a feeling; it is an overwhelming, controlling feeling, the likes of which a human being doesn’t have who doesn’t have that experience.

And every mother knows that there are no kudos, there are no laurels, no awards for mothering. What you basically get is a crying baby with dirty diapers, sleepless nights, who get sick and occupies all your time. But the feeling is so compelling. The affection is so profound. In fact, we all gasp when we hear about abortions. We gasp when we hear about mothers that throw their babies away, because it’s so contrary to everything that humanity should feel.

By the way, this verb is used in a non-biblical inscription--an ancient inscription on a tomb describing the parents’ yearning for the dead baby that was buried there. So it was probably a common term to refer to the feeling of a mother toward her baby, this compulsive love. It is so strong that Paul says we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, you know, you want to give your baby the best food, right? You want to give your baby physically the best nourishment.

Well, as a mother you want to give your baby Christ, right? So from a spiritual standpoint, you want to give Christ to your children. And that’s Paul. You want to give the gospel of God. But more than that, the love was so strong, they were so dear, we gave you our own lives, literally everything. And we were well-pleased to do it. It isn’t a burden. It isn’t an obligation. It’s a joy. And if that joy isn’t there, you want to question the calling of a man in ministry, to impart, to share our own lives, our own *psuche*, the totality of earthly existence, everything we are--a mother does that. She sets aside her life for the life of her beloved baby--sacrificial, unselfish, generous, giving profusely for the care of that little one.

You know, Paul at the end of 2 Corinthians chapter 12; this is really a painful moment for him. He says in verse 14, for the third time talking to the Corinthians, "I'm ready to come to you and I won't be a burden to you. I won't be a burden to you. I don't seek what is yours. I don't want anything from you." "For children"...no, backing up..."I don't seek what is yours but you, but you," for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. So, verse 15, "I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls." "I will spend and be expended for your souls." And then the heart-breaking statement, "If I have loved you the more, do you love me less?" How can this be?

Paul understands the mother love. Paul is saying, "If I love you more than parents love their children, will you love me less than children love their parents?" It was a love spent in unselfish sacrifice of his entire life. Why? "Because you had become very dear to us." Chapter 1, verse 4, you're "beloved by God," *agapetoi*. You're God's beloved, and because you're God's beloved, you've become my beloved. John said that whoever loves the Lord loves him who belongs to the Lord.

So here is the essence of parental leadership. It's like a mother--strong, compelling, overwhelming feeling of the preciousness of the child, leading to wanting to feed the child the truth that will cause life and growth and maturity and joy and blessing; willingness to make every sacrifice because of the strong affection and longing that drives the heart. And along the way patience: patience, patience, tender care as that little one develops. In verse 9, he fleshes it out, "You recall, you recall that I imparted to you my own life because of my labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God."

What God means there is that he got a job. He did this when he went to pagan places. Look, Paul is the first one to say, "Pay the preacher." In 1 Corinthians he says, "Whoever lives"...whoever preaches the gospel..."should live of the gospel." And he writes to Timothy and tells him, "Instruct the church this way. The elder who rules well and labors in the word and doctrine is worthy of double pay." That's a principle. The church is to care for the pastor. That's in the Word of God. But when you go into a pagan place and you bring the gospel, you don't want to make the gospel chargeable and so...I mean, we've pretty much followed that, haven't we, through the history of missions? Don't we support the missionaries who go so that they're not asking the pagans to give the money like the false teachers do? You recall our labor and hardship, like a mother who works and works hard, like the Proverbs 31 woman. In ancient times, mothers had a lot of hard work to do.

You remember our *kopos*, "exhausting work to the point of sweat and exhaustion." You remember our *mochthos*, "toil, struggle, effort, working night and day"; literally, "so as not to be a burden to any of you." That's what I just read you in 2 Corinthians. The children don't support the parent; the parent supports the children. Paul made the maximum effort to feed his spiritual children, provide their needed nourishment in the truth of the gospel, and not to be a burden to them--to care, to love them, to have compassion for them, and to carry the duties himself so that they would not be burdened. His

whole life is a life of dedication. It's in that context that we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. Around the clock like a loving mother, he cared for his people.

When you come to verse 10, you come to the second picture, which is of a father, a spiritual father. "You are witnesses, and so is God." Again, he's appealing to them; and he appeals to God to confirm it. He said that, of course, earlier. Verse 4, "We have been approved by God." Verse 5 at the end, "God is witness." And now he says it again, "You are witnesses, and so is God." He doesn't mind saying God knows this is so.

"You are witnesses, and so is God"...Now follow this..."how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children."

Now he turns to the father picture and two things come out of this: the responsibility to live the life and set the example, and the responsibility to instruct, "you are witnesses." And he starts with example, "how devoutly," *hosios*, "piously, holy," that's what he's saying. It refers to one's inward relationship to God. You know that. And he's said that again and again: "You know this, you know this, you know this, you know this." And not only inwardly, piously, devoted to the very holiness that honors God; but then he says, "uprightly," *dikaios*, and that moves outside--righteous behavior, adherence to the law of God. In the inside my heart was right before God, and on the outside you saw the manifestation as I endeavored to live my life of fulfilling my duty to the law of God, both toward man and God.

And then he adds, "And blamelessly." Free from anything that would discredit him, anything that would disqualify him. And he told the Corinthians he beat his body into submission so that he didn't become disqualified. This is how it has to be in pastoral ministry. This is a work of grace. Salvation, is that a work of grace? Let me tell you something, so is sanctification, so is sanctification. Paul could say that after months, months. We have to say that after years. Can you say you know and God knows how devotedly, devoutly, how righteously, how blamelessly I've lived my life before You? That is only by grace. That is only by grace.

How does anybody survive months, let alone years? It is by grace. It is by grace. That's why the standards for being a pastor in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are standards of character 'cause the example of the father is so critical. You know, it isn't so much what fathers say to their children that makes the difference, it's what fathers are; otherwise you're going to have hypocrisy, right? And who wants to pattern his life after a hypocrite? He says, "You are witnesses and so is God. How devoutly, and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers." It isn't just that you need to live a godly life before unbelievers. That's true, let your light shine, right, they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. But you need to live a godly life; you're a pastor before your people. So they need to know you. That's the first role that the spiritual father has is to set the standard by example.

Then in verse 11, he adds the instructional part of it, “how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring”--*marturomenoi*, “witnessing, testifying, solemnly charging you”—“each one of you as a father would his own children.” This is the authority part.

So on the one hand, the pastor is to be a mother with all the tenderness, compassion, patience, love, affection. On the other hand, a father who sets the model and the example and exhorts and encourages and implores. This is a picture of authority. This is the picture that balances off the mother.

And what’s the goal of these things? Verse 12, what do you want out of your children? That they “would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” What do you want out of your children in your life? What do you want out of your children? You want them to grow up and “walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His kingdom and glory.” And so spiritually that’s why we parent, because we’re dealing with children. We’ve birthed children. We’ve taken adopted children in that have come from somebody else, and that’s our flock and that’s our church, and we treat them like a mother and a father. We want them to grow up in Christ, to be fully formed into His likeness.

That’s how Paul viewed ministry. That’s how we have to view the responsibility of spiritual leadership. It’s a balancing act, it really is. On the one hand you have to have a concern for the children and a concern for the principle. You have to have a concern for kindness and a concern for discipline. You have to be patient and you have to be firm. And look, you grew up in a family and many of you have children, you fight this all the time. That’s why there is a mom and a dad, ’cause those things have to be in balance. Children need to grow up with love, acceptance, compassion, tenderness, patience, warmth, security; then you grow up with a model, an example, strong teaching, exhortation, encouragement, direction.

That’s not easy to do. But that’s the standard that Paul sets and so my response to this is, “Who is adequate for those things? Who is going to be able to do this?” Well, Paul asked that question in 2 Corinthians, didn’t he? In chapter 3 when he said, “Who is adequate for these things?” No man is adequate for these things. Then he said this, “But our adequacy comes from God,” “our adequacy comes from God.” It is by God’s grace and God’s power that we are able to even approximate this kind of leadership.

Throw people off the bus? Run over people? Treat them with disdain? I don’t think you could get away with that as a parental approach. Then you can’t get away with it in ministry. You’re not a pastor. You’re not a shepherd.

What is the result of leadership like this? Verse 13, "For this reason we also"--based upon what I've just said, and having seen you walk in a manner worthy of the God who called you--"for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God which also performs its work in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus." We'll stop there.

Hey, his children very soon, in months, because he writes this after he leaves under pressure. He leaves after months, and he turns right around and writes back, and this is how he talks about them. How long does it take to plant a mature church in paganism, where there's been no Christianity? Zero, nothing--how fast can you get a mature group of people who walk worthy of the God who called them, who thank the Lord for His Word, who hear it as the Word of God and not the word of men, who see it perform its work and who become imitators of other believers who are more mature? How long does it take? It took months with the right kind of leadership, with the right kind of leadership.

There was success in the ministry in that church, but that's not the last word. Go down to verse 19 of this chapter, we'll end because our time is gone. "Who is our hope," verse 19, "or joy or crown of exaltation? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy."

Do you remember in Hebrews 13, verse 17, where the writer of Hebrews says to people in the church, "Submit to your leaders for they watch for your souls?" Submit to them so they can do it with joy and not with grief. When leaders are parents, faithful parents, a mother and a father, the children grow, flourish, mature, those children become the joy of the parents, right? That's the picture. You're our joy. What is my greatest joy as a parent humanly speaking? To see my children in the presence of the Lord, to one day see my children in the presence of the Lord. That's the same as a pastor--to see my children in the presence of the Lord; that's the greatest joy. It isn't just the success of the church, it's the eternal fellowship of people you love. That's what pastoral ministry is really all about.

Father, we thank You, this morning, that we have been able to look at Your Word and see such a helpful picture of the pastor's heart commitment. It seems to me that there are many people who are being abused by those who should be a mother and a father to them. Spiritual child abuse. Many are uncared for, unloved, struggling. Would you raise up a generation of pastors who are like parents, like loving, tender, affectionate mothers and strong, exemplary, teaching fathers, who love their spiritual children and raise them, nurture them into Christlike adulthood. Lord, we're so grateful that we have all the tools to do that. We have Your Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit. May we be faithful to the Word and yielded to the Spirit too in some measure. Although we all fall short, be faithful to this model.

And now, Father, we pray that You will seal these things to our own hearts and enable us to honor You in obedience. Help us to understand that ministry is not just methods; it's attitudes. It's an attitude that determines what method we'll use. And if the heart attitude is like Paul's, then the method is going to be the right one. So start with our attitudes and make us what You would have us to be, spiritual parents to the flock that You've given to us. And for all those parents who are here, moms and dads, help them to live out these same principles as they raise their little ones to know and love You. Open the hearts of folks that are here and those that You would draw to Yourself, bring to the prayer room and we pray that You'll do Your work in every life and for that we'll give You praise and gratitude in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).